

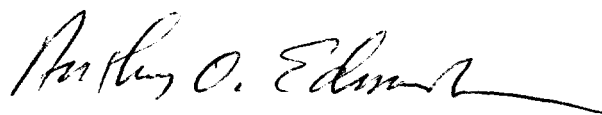
"The Culture of the 1970s Reflected Through
Bruce Springsteen's Music"

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Anthony O. Edmonds", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

some overriding themes which reflect general American culture in the 1970s.¹

There probably have been few cult heroes in rock like Springsteen. And not coincidentally, Springsteen loved and was inspired by classic artists like Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones.² In the case of many rock groups, the general interest in commercial success has dissipated the basic feelings about rock, however, Springsteen has brought back those deep-rooted feelings of what rock is all about. And he has done this, not because he doesn't need or even want commercial success, but because commercial success is not what matters to him most. Springsteen has something he wants to say. His insistence on making his statement is exemplified in the case of his latest album Nebraska. He recorded this album on a four-track cassette, at his New Jersey home³ without the E Street Band, his usual back-up group. By doing this, it seems that it is more important to him to be able to say his message than to have many album-oriented rock (AOR) stations play the album. Nebraska is a completely different style of music than what most AOR stations are used to -- too different for most of the stations. It is a solo album with Springsteen singing and playing an acoustic guitar and sometimes the harmonica. Some of the songs are a bit bluesy, while others are rockabilly. But the overriding message that Nebraska is conveying is something that Springsteen wanted to say -- whether or not the AOR stations would play it.

In reality, Nebraska was no surprise as Springsteen

has been saying exactly what he has wanted to say all along to people who grew up in the same conditions as he did. As more of these people listen and can relate to him, his popularity grows. This growth is shown by the fact that following the release of The River in 1980, ticket requests showed that he could have sold out Madison Square Gardens sixteen nights in a row.⁴ Through his music, Springsteen reaches down to working-class homes whose culture is television and the daily paper to tell their inhabitants that there is a better way to live than they are presently living. After figuratively saying, "I know how you feel," Springsteen tells them, "But there's really a way out" -- however faint, the ray of hope for "something more" gleams through.

Bruce grew up in Asbury Park, a small-time beach town in New Jersey.⁵ He attended a Catholic school, and being a headstrong, idealistic kid who refused to learn his place, he naturally drew the wrong kind of attention from authorities. He doesn't say exactly what he did to get the attention, but he feels that Nuns seemed to single him out for harassment.⁶ He then attended a public high school and eventually college. Around 1968 when he was attending college, he was considered weird too; not just weird though, even those who were weird thought he was weird. He has said, "People thought I was weird because I always went around with this look on my face. I was thinking of things, but I was always on the outside looking in." Eventually a petition was signed by students asking him to leave the college he was attending. Because a producer offered him a chance to make a record

at this time, Springsteen agreed to quit college. He never heard from the producer again, but he didn't go back to school either.⁷

In early 1969, when Douglas Springsteen decided to move to California to find work, Bruce decided he was not going. At that time, Bruce felt he could relate to only three things -- surfing, cars, and music.⁸ Growing up on the shore in a beach town explains his love for surfing. And music was the channel through which he finally felt he could express himself. However, this fascination with cars came from a deep-rooted family influence. His father had always loved to drive. He had been a bus driver and a taxi driver. He always liked to drive the family around. Sometimes the family would go out and just drive.*⁹

Springsteen grew up in the classic 1960s style. Besides having "bad" cars, he avoided the draft by checking every reason for him to be rejected, including homosexuality.¹⁰

Springsteen's family was a working class one. His father worked at a variety of jobs from factory worker to prison guard and eventually a bus driver.¹¹ His and Bruce's relationship was the common story of father and son. They never got along although they really loved each other deeply.¹³ Bruce reflects on this relationship in concert with a song called "Independence Day." Before he sings the song, he tells

*Within Springsteen grew a fascination with the highway, and still he loves "the feeling of being in an auto, behind the wheel or careening wrecklessly."¹² This love for highways and cars is reflected in all of his albums, especially several songs from Darkness on the Edge of Town, several from The River, and almost all of Nebraska.

a story about himself and his father. Then he finally sums up the relationship when he sings:

Papa, go to bed now, it's getting late
Nothing we say is gonna change anything now
I'll be leaving in the morning from Saint Mary's gate
I wouldn't change this thing even if we could somehow.

I don't know what it always was with us
We chose the words and yeah, we drew the lines
There was just no way this house could hold the two of us
I guess that we were just too much of the same kind.¹⁴
So won't you just say good-bye, it's Independence Day.

Many times Douglas Springsteen, Bruce's father, would come home from work, drunk, with a six-pack to boot. And every day Adele Springsteen, Bruce's mother, would set her hair, watch TV until she fell asleep, and then get up and go to work the next day.¹⁵

As one would expect of a father, Springsteen's father hated the idea of his son playing the guitar. His father wanted him to be a lawyer. "Lawyers run the world." But Bruce just wanted to write songs, play the guitar, and sing.¹⁶

Bruce was a typical rebellious youth. He felt he needed a way to express himself. As it turns out, his father was against the way he found. That is why they fought. Springsteen had long hair, but he tried to slick it back to hide it. His father would yell for him to get it cut, and Bruce would yell right back. Bruce would run the streets late at night with his buddies until the police picked him up. They would call all the parents to come and get the boys. All the other boys' fathers would come, but it was always Bruce's mother who came to get him. However, Douglas Springsteen would be waiting up in the unlit kitchen when Bruce walked in. He would make Bruce sit down and he would lecture him about making something of himself. Finally he and Bruce would start

screaming and fighting. Adele would pull Douglas off her son, and Bruce would run away screaming that it was his life and he would do what he wanted.¹⁷

Springsteen's life itself is a story of triumph. In some of his songs, such as "Born To Run," he writes that there is hope for triumph-- triumph over the working class way of life. In many of his songs, he acknowledges that there is a constant running and searching for something more somewhere by working class people, his class. In "Spirit In The Night," he writes about this running and searching happening in small towns like the one he grew up in. In "Jungleland," he tells about it happening in large cities. In both places, there is a hidden trap that catches some people. It is a circular trap that causes their lives to go nowhere, to stay the same as generations before them. This trap makes these people feel as if their lives were empty and meaningless. It causes them to run around with their eyes open wide for an escape from this trap, for a way to make something more of their lives. Springsteen tells these people, his own grass roots, that there is really a way out of that life filled with hopelessness. And this message of hope seems to be the overriding message in Springsteen's music.

To understand exactly what this trap is, what caused it, and how it relates to the culture of the 1970s, one must first consider the origin of this feeling of being trapped. To find the origin, one must look back at the after-effects of WWII, the time during late 1950s and

early 1960s when the post-war baby boomers were growing up. Domestically, in the U.S., there was peace. In general, America was more affluent than ever before. Many Americans had those things that they had always worked for. Americans had faith in the United States. They felt that America could solve its domestic and foreign problems. Their futures seemed bright; their hopes were high; their dreams were great. Then in the 1960s came the rebellion against the establishment. Great hopes were crushed. Dreams were broken and the search for fulfillment began. That search eventually lead to several results. People tried to find a way to escape economically from the habits of their personal daily lives, others delved into narcissism. (The 1970s has been called the "Me-Decade" more than once.) Other people became apathetic. And yet others became very romantic, creating fantasies in their own minds about their lives. These solutions were not just solutions of those who were products of the baby boom era. They are, in fact, a reflection of the basic American culture of the 1970s.

It was sometime during the settlement of the West that there came into existence the concept of the American Dream. This dream is that if one works hard to get ahead, he will, and if he is lucky enough, make it to the top without having to work hard his whole life. The 49ers who did get ahead, those who found gold dust, epitomized the American Dream as did the Beverly Hillbillies. They were good people, they struck it rich, and they were happy.

Another side of the American Dream is the dream of belonging to Middle America. Shiva Naipaul, in his book Journey To Nowhere, explains a little about Sunnyvale, a very middle American city in California where the American Dream is very prevalent among its inhabitants. "Conformity was the first prerequisite of happiness in Sunnyvale." This conformity, he goes on to explain, is the idea that "all belong to that vast featureless prairie of clean-thinking humanity known as Middle America, whose chief cultural monuments are the self-contained shopping plaza and cavernous discount store."¹⁸ In the numerous studies done to find statistics on American families, Middle America is described as something like a family having 2.2 cars, 2.1 children, having a home in the suburbs with two pets and 1.5 working parents who belong to at least four clubs between the two of them. They are happy and they are the American Dream.

Those dreams which were previously referred to, those great dreams developed in the 1950s and the 1960s, were at base the American Dream. However, the fulfillment of these great dreams contradicted something else which originated in that era. That is, the baby boomers were the first generation to search for happiness as an end in itself.¹⁹ But they found that fulfillment of the American Dream did not mean happiness.

Those housewives who finally had raised their children to high school age and had been working as part-time secretaries for the local grade school for a few years suddenly started talking to each other openly about their unfulfilled lives.

Many of them started denying that they were ecstatic about finding a new bleach to get their sons' baseball socks whiter. Then came the Women's Movement -- women's liberation and a decline in the sales of Playtex bras. This was a part of the origin of that "searching" for something more.

Although the women's movement was stimulated from the need to find something more in life, there were several other groups at this time who started searching for something. The hippies came. They believed that what they were searching for was to be found in getting back to the mother nature basics of life. Although they were basically a product of the 1960s, they evolved into some of the cults of today.

In Journey To Nowhere, Naipaul describes the "New Earth Explosion," which was a major festival on self-reliance, that took place in California. This "Explosion" was based on the society of Kerista (which seems to be at least very close to a cult). Naipaul tells of how the Keristans believed that "Interrelatedness. Human. Fragile. Lifestyle." was what life was all about. Getting close to the earth was life. As Naipaul puts it, "Muddy vans represented the owners' closeness to the soil." The overriding message is that these people had at least temporarily found "something" in their search for fulfillment.²⁰

Although some people temporarily found "something," others found nothing and their search for that "something" was still on. This is when people began to turn to measures other than joining an organization or trying to find a "cause" to live and work for. Many people who were still searching turned to those escapes mentioned previously --

physical or economic escape, narcissism, romance, or apathy. However, too often, these things turned out to be empty hopes also.

All of these things can be discussed in terms of Springsteen's music. First of all, physical escape, in this sense, refers to the idea of physically leaving the city. Some people who feel they are trapped believe that the solution is to actually physically escape from the place. In songs such as "Born To Run," the speaker tells about his car and how he and his lover could leave and " . . . never go back . . . " And in "Thunder Road," the speaker says, "These two lanes will take us anywhere." These two songs suggest that the speaker and his lover could just drive away, right out of their problems in life. They could physically escape.

In another sense, a physical escape can be an economic escape. This is suggested in the song "Factory" on the Darkness on the Edge of Town album. This is a song about a man whose whole life has been centered around his work at a particular factory. Springsteen writes,

Through mansions of glory
Through mansions of pain
I see my daddy walking through them factory gates
in the rain
Factory takes his hearing, factory gives him life
The working, the working, the working life.

End of the day, factory whistle cries,
Men walk through the gates with death in their eyes,
And you just better believe, boy,
Somebody's gonna get hurt tonight,
It's the working, the working, just the working life.²¹

This song describes the sadness of being wrapped up in factory life day after day. It has been the same daily routine for this worker, the speaker's daddy, for several

years. The only thing that the speaker sees coming for his father is death. The speaker mentions that men walk through the gates with death in their eyes. That is an overt message of doom. This leaves no hope for anything better. And being on the Darkness of the Edge of Town album, the message becomes even clearer. The speaker seems to be saying that he doesn't want to get caught in the doom of the working class as his father did. Springsteen subtly suggests that the speaker hopes to find an escape, an economic escape.

The next escape resulting from the search for "something" is the turn to narcissism or self-indulgence. The 1970s is known for narcissism probably better than anything else representative of that decade. After the conformity of the 1950s and the counter cultures of the 1960s, the result was the 1970s filled with narcissism. In some ways, this ties in with the idea of romance. In many of Springsteen's songs, he writes about the romance of lovers. He writes about the lovers who feel that if they are together forever, everything will be alright. This is narcissistic in the sense that the lovers indulge in "themselves." So although romance will be used later in another sense, at this time, it refers to the lovers indulging into "themselves."

Ideas on narcissism and narcissistic romance are prevalent in songs such as "Thunder Road" and "Born To Run," two of Springsteen's classics. Both songs are off the album Born To Run. The beginning of "Thunder Road" goes as follows:

The screen door slams
 Mary's dress waves
 Like a vision she dances across the porch
 As the radio plays
 Roy Orbison singing for the lonely
 Hey that's me and I want you only
 Don't turn me home again
 I just can't face myself alone again
 Don't run back inside
 Darling you know just what I'm here for
 So you're scared and thinking
 That maybe we ain't that young anymore
 Show a little faith, there's magic in the night
 You ain't a beauty, but hey you're alright

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With a chance to make it good somehow
 Hey what else can we do now?
 Except roll down the window
 And let the wind blow
 Back your hair
 Well the night's busting open
 These two lanes will take us anywhere
 We got one last chance to make it real
 To trade in these wings on some wheels
 Climb in back
 Heaven's waiting down on the tracks.²²

First of all, the "screen door" informs us that Mary probably belongs, at the highest level, to a working class family. Then the speaker tells her he wants her only, even though she "ain't a beauty . . . hey, you're alright." He then offers her the chance to ride with him to heaven, which happens to be "down on the tracks." The speaker presents this opportunity in a very romantic way, even before he mentions heaven. After asking, "What else can we do now?" he suggests to her, the only thing there is to do in his opinion, to indulge in the carefree feeling expressed by "roll down the window, and let the wind blow back your hair . . . these two lanes will take us anywhere." It is as if he were saying, "What else could you want, Mary?

Come ride with me in my car and we'll go anywhere." Presumably he will take her away from this life, the working class life of hopelessness. Later in the song, he blatantly admits his feelings. "It's a town full of losers, and I'm pulling out of here to win." He is full of romance and hopeful dreams that he will actually leave this place and find out there -- wherever he is going -- the something that he is searching for.

In the second song representative of narcissism and romance, "Born To Run," Springsteen alludes to the American Dream in his opening line. "In the day we sweat it out on the streets of a runaway American Dream." This line sets the mood of the song by introducing the existence of a "runaway dream." However, eventually in this song, he comes up with an alternative to sweating out the dream. The alternative turns out to be very romantic and even a bit narcissistic. The speaker tells his girl,

Baby this town rips the bone from your back
It's a death trap, it's a suicide rap
We gotta get out while we're young,
Cause tramps like us, baby we were born to run.²³

First he convinces her that they must get away, escape.

Then he goes on to explain how he feels about her

Wendy let me in, I wanna be your friend
I want to guard your dreams and visions . . .

. . . Together we could break this trap
We'll run till we drop and baby we'll never go back.

By telling his lover how he feels, he presents this escape in a way that tells her that if they are together, they can really escape forever. Again the romantic feeling of belief in themselves as "one" is expressed. Narcissism

is expressed more overtly in another part of the song where the speaker says, "the girls comb their hair in the rear-view mirrors and the boys try to look so hard." In this case, the subjects are seemingly narcissistic, but the underlying feeling is that the subjects are doing this to cover up what they feel inside. Inside they actually are "searching" just as many other people are. In fact, as they drive down the boulevard, they are actually in search of something -- whether it is excitement, sex, love, a reason to live, or something that has no name.

The speaker continues to romanticize when he says,

The amusement park rises bold and stark
The kids are huddled on the streets in a mist
I want to die with you Wendy on the streets tonight
In an everlasting kiss.

The use of the word "mist" makes everything seem even more romantic. It is as if the whole scene is a dream. The speaker tries to convince Wendy that the two of them can just drive off right out of real life -- he romanticizes. He even suggests the story of Romeo and Juliet. But rather than killing themselves together with poison, they will just die in an everlasting kiss. Quite romantic. Romance and narcissism seem to be the answer to the speaker's search. However, when he drives down that road, he will probably turn around and return down the strip. Although the speaker promises escape and hope, there is also a real sense of doom. His whole promise is quite dreamlike and unreal. And in reality, it holds no hope. For that time though, he had found an answer and doesn't have to face the fact

that, at that moment, his life has very little meaning to anyone.

The whole idea of narcissism and romance explicitly expressed here has a very literal interpretation. There really exists places known as "the strip" located near just about every public high school in America. It is the strip that everyone drives, a thousand times a summer every Friday and Saturday night, in search of something to do or just plain in search of "something." Although narcissism and romance are expressed so explicitly in the culture of the 1970s, there is a little more subtle display of the two. The 1970s has been called the Me-Decade. If one looks at the top-ten bestselling books in America, for more than any one given month, he will probably see at least one self-help book listed, if not several. One of the very popular ones was Dale Carnegie's How To Win Friends and Influence People. (In other words, how to get YOUR way.) Another popular one was Looking Out For Number One. (Of course, you are number one in your life. You should please yourself before you try to please anyone else.) Other popular narcissistic books were The Sky's The Limit and Your Erroneous Zones by Dr. Wayne Dyer. There are numerous other books of the same nature. These books tell how to make yourself the best you can be. Through all of them, narcissistic beliefs run rampant.

In addition to books, other aspects of culture reflect self-indulgence in the 1970s. In that decade there were common advertisements of workshops being held titled such

ways as "Getting to Know Yourself" or "Becoming the Person You Want to Be." There were also nationwide commercials concentrating on narcissism. McDonald's said, "You deserve a break today." Since most people felt they did deserve to treat themselves pretty well, they decided they would take a break, and McDonald's became one of the most successful fast-food restaurants of all times. Although McDonalds' success did not necessarily result from that motto, the point is that a very successful organization had a narcissistic motto in its number one nationwide commercial.

Although narcissism is the main theme of the 1970s, there are other qualities of the culture quite evident also. Romance has been reflected by a couple indulging in themselves. However, there is another side to romance -- dreaming and imagining. In many of Springsteen's songs, he presents an activity which quite literally happens. He then goes on to write about it in a very romantic way. This connotes more than just his style of writing, however. It is a way of explaining how some people in their search seem to make more of reality than what is actually there. Unfortunately, eventually these same people come to terms with reality and continue to search, at least until the same thing happens again. One song in which this is shown is "Jungleland." This song is about a gang fight that takes place in a big city. Springsteen tells of the fight using imagery of a rock and roll band which becomes the gang. "Kids flash guitars like switch-blades, hustling for the record machine . . . down in Jungleland."

In this case, by comparing a rock concert and a gang fight, he is making both seem more romantic than either is alone. He goes on a tangent convincing himself that a rock and roll band is like a gang fight or vice-versa. Either way, as the speaker sees it, each is not just a fight or just a concert. But finally in the last verse, he lets on that there is a question in his mind about what is reality and what is fantasy.

Outside the street's on fire
 In a real death waltz
 Between what's flesh and what's fantasy.
 And the poets down here
 Don't write nothing at all
 They just stand back and let it all be.²⁴

It is as if he suddenly realizes that he had escaped reality by indulgence in the romantic side. Thus, the battle or the concert is over, and he realizes that much of what has happened has been only in his imagination. Suddenly the feeling of hopelessness returns. And although he has not yet found a permanent escape from it all, temporarily he had.

Gang fights were not especially noted in the 1970s, but there is no question about the popularity of rock concerts. Within some cliques in high school, the black concert tee shirts became a symbol. Not only did they reflect the popularity of the concerts, but actually were so important in some groups that they became a status symbol. When kids went to concerts, they could romanticize. At the concert they were in a different world. They could be a rock and roll star while they were there. And when a star like Springsteen is the star of the concert, the

kid is even more likely to be romantic because he knows that Springsteen used to be a kid in the audience like himself. Springsteen used to be the kid romanticizing. To the kid at the concert, this gives him hope that he could rise far above the life he is presently living and be somebody He might even become a rock star himself someday.

After a point of romanticizing, when one finally faces reality again, he may become apathetic about finding the permanent escape he had hoped for. Apathy was a common characteristic of the American culture in the 1970s. In some cases, apathy resulted from people not finding the gratification they had hoped for in economic escape, narcissism, or romance. In other cases, apathy seemed to be the direct result of their need to find fulfillment. Apathy was the answer to their dissatisfaction with their search to find "something more."

When people tried and failed to escape physically or economically, after so long a time, they just gave up. They became tired of trying to get out of a way of life from which there was ultimately no real escape for them. People who were first narcissistic sometimes became bored and felt guilty about being so involved in themselves. Ultimately it was easier to just let everything stand as it was. Many had searched for so long that upon not finding fulfillment, they became apathetic. They felt they would no longer put effort forth which was inevitably in vain.

However the feeling of apathy originated, it was there. And it was in very strong force as well. In High School, David Owen, the author, at age 24 decides to go back to high school as a senior in the fall of 1979. He reexperiences many of those unsure feelings common to all teenagers. He feels peer pressure and the longing to go out and have the "real fun" that the kids who drive the strip on the weekends long for. Owen noticed that the educational system had deteriorated since he had been in school a few years earlier. Most of the kids had no desire to learn. The teachers seemed to be so tired of trying to teach the kids things that they didn't want to learn that they decided not to teach them at all. In one place, the English teacher says that the reason he doesn't have the kids write themes is because the kids don't know how to write. The teacher is resigned to this fact. Even more than accept it, he decides to act on behalf of this fact by not assigning papers that he otherwise would have assigned.²⁵

Throughout the spanse of different types of American cultures, apathy has shone through. Politically, in the 1970s, many people were so disappointed that they decided not to even bother to vote. Their attitude was, "My vote doesn't matter. Why take the time to vote?" They were equally apathetic about the candidates. A common thought seemed to be, "If I vote, I'll just be voting for the lesser of two evils anyway. Why vote?"

This political apathy stems in part from Kennedy's

assassination. In 1960, Kennedy was elected by 49.7 per cent of the popular vote. By June 1963, 59 per cent of those polled said they had voted for him. Then after his assassination, 65 percent polled claimed they had voted for him. That means that, actually, one out of two people who had voted in 1960 had voted for Kennedy. Three years later, two out of every three believed they had voted for him. This reflects the kind of hope and promise that many Americans believed Kennedy offered. Many Americans were captivated by his youth, charm, and good looks as well as his chic, his wit, and his glamor. Many Americans identified with him as a symbol of their own ideals and goals for themselves and their country. Then all of a sudden, the "prince" dies meaninglessly. It revives the old myth in which the blameless king dies so that his people may live.²⁶ And thus, after his death, Kennedy is seen to have embodied Christlike qualities. The loss of Kennedy was much more than the loss of a President or a friend. It was symbolically the loss of many high hopes and ideals for many Americans.

Many people felt deprived when Kennedy was assassinated. As William E. Leuchtenburg puts it:

The young felt a special sense of deprivation at Kennedy's death. The slain President had broken through the middle-aged complacency of the 1950s to give the feeling of hopefulness about American society and a free field to the idealism of young people. They had admired him too, the President's gallantry and the impression he conveyed of being a valorous adventurer who was, William Carleton wrote, in the romantic

tradition of Achilles, Roland, Bayard, Raleigh, and Henry of Navarre. By any rational calculation, it was not the young of the 1960s, but Kennedy's contemporaries, the Depression generation pushing fifty, who had grounds for grievance at being denied a leader. But as Richard Newstadt commented less than a year after the President's murder, "He left a broken promise that the torch has been passed to a new generation," and the youngsters who identified with them felt cheated as the promise, like the glamor, disappeared. What do their feelings matter? We shall have to wait and see?²⁷

As Leuchtenburg says, both the young and the old in different ways felt deprived. This assassination along with the race riots and other antiestablishment activities of the 1960s seems to have caused enough disappointment in America to lead any individual to apathy. And these events occurred after the happy, affluent times of the 1950s. The dramatic times of the 1960s following the complacency of the 1950s was enough to imagine that some drastic outcome might result. And as has been explained throughout this thesis, the 1970s was filled with dissatisfaction.

Apathy was an outstanding characteristic of society in the 1970s. As has been mentioned, there was political apathy, economic apathy, and educational apathy. Apathy didn't stop there. It was felt deep in many people's hearts also. Springsteen writes about that kind of apathy in many of his songs.

In "Jungleland" by the time the gang fight which takes place throughout the song is over at the dawn of the next day, nothing seems to really be finished. All that is left is a feeling that this same kind of thing is condemned to happen forever.²⁸ On the Born To Run album, the heroes are doomed to drive the strip forever

seeking what can't be found.²⁹ Although the characters have escaped temporarily from their doom, they go back to exactly what they had escaped from. They could be considered apathetic in the sense that they are resigned to the fact that they can find no permanent escape.

In "Spirit In The Night" from Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J., the spirit in the night seems to also represent a spirit of escape. The same kind of pretentious hope is expressed in this song as in many people's lives. The kids in the song go to Greasy Lake to "get out, have some fun, seek the Promised Land."³⁰ But they all know that there is no chance for permanent freedom. In the end, the kids all drive back to their drudgery.³¹

Another song in which Springsteen expresses a sense of apathy is "Streets of Fire" from Darkness on the Edge of Town.

When the night's quiet and you don't care anymore.
And your eyes are tired and there's someone
at your door
And you realize you wanna let go
And the weak lies and the cold walls you
embrace
Eat at your insides and leave you face
to face with
Streets of fire.³²

The opening line of this song, " . . . and you don't care anymore" is a direct expression of apathy. The whole song reveals the feeling of being condemned to something unfavorable, in this case, the streets of fire. The speaker here, knowing he is condemned to the streets of fire, doesn't care anymore. Most people who feel condemned to something

like this eventually "don't care anymore."

"Something in the Night" also from Darkness on the Edge of Town expresses another kind of apathy.

You're born with nothing,
and better off that way,
Soon as you've got something they send
someone to try and take it away,
You can ride this road 'till dawn,
without another human being in sight,
Just kids wasted on
something in the night.³³

This song projects clear apathy: it doesn't matter if you're born with nothing or not because if you have something or as soon as you get something, someone will try to take it away. The "they" used in "they send someone to try and take it away" is rather ambiguous. The speaker could be referring to the Establishment. However, he probably is not referring to anyone in particular. "They" is used in an apathetic sense. The speaker doesn't know who will do it, but because he is so apathetic, he knows someone, whoever it may be, will try to take the "something" away. Thus the apathy prevalent among Americans in the 1970s is clearly shown in many of Springsteen's songs.

At the outset of this thesis, the culture of the 1970s was to be expressed in terms of Springsteen's songs. The most outstanding characteristics of the 1970s were narcissism, romance, and apathy. Bruce Springsteen has represented these characteristics in many of the characters he has created on his albums. There are various characters represented in his songs, but the characters are usually working class youth. Although it is their feelings that are expressed,

one can see the overriding message. The message is thematic in the sense that it is an expression of the feelings of the culture of that generation.

Notes

¹(For general information reference) William E. Leuchtenburg, A Troubled Feast: American Society Since 1945. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1983.

²Dave Marsh, Born To Run: The Bruce Springsteen Story. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979. p. 16.

³ , "Springsteen Goes Solo On Next LP," Rolling Stone, Sept. 16, 1982, p. 58.

⁴Linda E. Watson, "Inquirer," TEEN, Sept., 1981, p. 54.

⁵Marsh, p. 16.

⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁷Ibid., p. 29.

⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁹Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 12.

¹¹Ibid., p. 12.

¹²Ibid., p. 12.

¹³Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴Bruce Springsteen, "Independence Day," The River, Columbia Records, 1980.

¹⁵Marsh, p. 15.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁸Shiva Naipaul, Journey To Nowhere. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981. p. 201.

- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 202.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 187.
- ²¹Bruce Springsteen, "Factory," Darkness on the Edge of Town, Columbia Records, 1978.
- ²²Bruce Springsteen, "Thunder Road," Born To Run, Columbia Records, 1978.
- ²³Bruce Springsteen, "Born To Run," Born To Run, Columbia Records, 1975.
- ²⁴Bruce Springsteen, "Jungleland," Born To Run, Columbia Records, 1975.
- ²⁵David Owen, High School: Undercover With The Class Of '80. New York: Viking Press, 1981. pp. 254.
- ²⁶Godfrey Hodgson, America In Our Time. New York: Random House, Inc., 1976. p. 5.
- ²⁷Leuchtenburg, p. 134-135.
- ²⁸Marsh, p. 110.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 112.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 112.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 45.
- ³²Bruce Springsteen, "Streets of Fire," Darkness on the Edge of Town, Columbia Records, 1978.
- ³³Bruce Springsteen, "Darkness on the Edge of Town," Darkness On the Edge of Town, Columbia Records, 1978.

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- Springsteen, Bruce, "Darkness On the Edge Of Town," "Factory," "Streets of Fire," Darkness On the Edge Of Town, Columbia Records, 1978.
- Springsteen, Bruce, "Independence Day," The River, Columbia Records, 1980.
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For the purpose of general referencing, the following is
a list of all of Springsteen's albums released up
to date.

Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.

Columbia Records, 1973

Blinded By the Light
Growin' Up
Mary Queen of Arkansas
Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?
Lost in the Flood

The Angel
For You
Spirit in the Night
It's Hard to Be a Saint In the City

The Wild, The Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle

Columbia Records, 1973

The E Street Shuffle
4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)
Kitty's Back
Wild Billy's Circus Story

Incident of 57th Street
Rosalita (Come Out Tonight)
New York City Serenade

Born To Run

Columbia Records, 1975

Thunder Road
Tenth Avenue Freeze Out
Night
Backstreets

Born To Run
She's The One
Meeting Across the River
Jungleland

Darkness on the Edge of Town

Columbia Records, 1978

Badlands
Adam Raised A Cain
Something In the Night
Candy's Room
Racing In the Street

The Promised Land
Factory
Streets of Fire
Prove It All Night
Darkness on the Edge of Town

The River

Columbia Records, 1980

The Ties That Bind
Sherry Darling
Jackson Cage
Two Hearts
Independence Day

Hungry Heart
Out In the Street
Crush On You
You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)
I Wanna Marry You
The River

Point Blank
Cadillac Ranch
I'm A Rocker
Fade Away
Stolen Car

Ramrod
The Price You Pay
Drive All Night
Wreck on the Highway

Nebraska

Columbia Records, 1982

Nebraska
Atlantic City
Mansion on the Hill
Johnny 99
Highway Patrolman
State Trooper

Used Cars
Open All Night
My Father's House
Reason To Believe